

READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

Mother Teresa: An Authorized Biography

by

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1. Drana Bojaxhiu, Mother Teresa's mother, taught her children: "When you do good, do it quietly, as if you were throwing a stone into the sea" (p. 7). Do you agree that people should help others *quietly*? How might you go about this?
2. When she was young, Mother Teresa learned that "the absence of material things did not necessarily impair the capacity for happiness" (pp. 17–18). What are your thoughts about this? How is Mother Teresa's outlook on possessions different from the outlook displayed by many people today?
3. On September 10, 1946, Mother Teresa received an order from God to leave Loreto and serve the poorest

of the poor (p. 22). Do you believe that God speaks directly to people? Have you ever heard God speak to you? If so, how did you know it was God speaking?

4. In her early years, Mother Teresa was “devout but otherwise apparently unexceptional” (p. 25), but it cannot be disputed that she did exceptional works for God over the course of her life. Why might God choose to work through seemingly “unexceptional” people?
5. Mother Teresa kept very few of her letters and writings; she was “far too occupied with the present to be unduly concerned about the past” (p. 35). What are some advantages of living this way? Disadvantages?
6. In the early days of Mother Teresa’s service in Calcutta, the sisters often had insufficient money to meet even their own needs. But during these times, provisions often came from unexpected sources (p. 49). Have you ever experienced a time in which your needs were provided for in a way that can only be explained by divine providence? Have you ever felt prompted to give to others in a way that you cannot explain? If so, tell about it.
7. Mother Teresa and the sisters welcomed into their home people who otherwise would have died alone in the streets of Calcutta, thus allowing them to die with dignity (p. 55). Do you see a similar reverence for human dignity in our society?
8. What people does our society devalue (p. 67)? How might we work to combat this and value all people?

9. How does Mother Teresa's knowledge of the saints differ from the knowledge Christians today have of the saints (p. 72)? How might being more familiar with the lives and writings of great Christians be beneficial to us?
10. Why do you think the Missionaries of Charity grew so quickly (p. 79)? What can we learn from this rapid growth?
11. Mother Teresa saw a spiritual poverty among those who lived in societies that were rich in material possessions: "Here you have the Welfare State. Nobody need starve. But there is a different poverty. The poverty of the spirit, of loneliness and being unwanted" (pp. 85–86). Why do you think this poverty of the unwanted was of more concern to her than leprosy or other diseases she encountered among the poor? How prevalent do you think this type of poverty is in our society? How might we fight it?
12. Mother Teresa and Brother Andrew disagreed about many things when it came to their ways of life (pp. 111–12), but even so, they maintained a pleasant relationship. How did they remain gracious in their disagreements? How might you be more gracious when you have disagreements with others?
13. The Co-Workers of the Missionaries of Charity were asked to "identify the need that was nearest to them and to meet it by giving of their time and their energy" (p. 132). Why do you think they were asked to do this rather than to travel to other places to meet needs?

What steps might you take to meet the needs of the people nearest to you?

14. “If a woman fulfills her role in the home, if there is peace in her surroundings, there will be peace in the world. There is a part of a woman that no man can take—the power of producing, the power of love” (p. 151). What is your response to this? How is it contrary to the view of women today?
15. Mother Teresa liked to quote Augustine, who said, “Fill yourself first and then only will you be able to give to others” (p. 181). How might a person fill himself or herself in preparation for service to others?
16. The spread of misinformation was sometimes detrimental to Mother Teresa’s work among the poor and the ill (p. 208). How did misinformation hurt her and those around her? How might we combat the spread of misinformation in our efforts?
17. In 1990, Mother Teresa wished to be released from her position as the superior general of the Missionaries of Charity, but she was re-elected once again (p. 226). She said, “I had expected to be free, but God has his own plans. It is God’s will and we have to do what he wants from us.” How might you cultivate this flexibility and openness?
18. Though Mother Teresa was widely loved by those who interacted with her, there were some who criticized her work (pp. 245–46). What is your response to these criticisms?

19. Like many other great Christians, Mother Teresa experienced a time in her life when she did not feel God's presence (p. 300). Does this surprise you? Why do you think this feeling is common among people who desire to be close to God? Have you ever experienced such a time in your life?
20. Mother Teresa lived in a way that runs completely contrary to how most people in our society live. She had few possessions, didn't value money, and made it her mission to serve the poorest people she could find. What are the benefits of such a lifestyle? Drawbacks? What lessons can you take from Mother Teresa's life and apply to your own?